



## Fact Sheet

### Washington State's

# Group B drinking water program

Group B public water systems serve fewer than 15 connections and fewer than 25 people. At present, 13,400 Group B water systems provide drinking water to 2 percent of the state's population. They are not subject to the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. As such, regulating these systems has always been a challenge for us. Historically, to implement the Group B Program, we relied on working partnerships with local health jurisdictions (LHJs).

From 1995 through 2013, State Board of Health Rules provided a way for applicants to obtain approval for a new or expanding Group B public water system that required treatment for a health-based drinking water contaminant. Under these rules, LHJs had several options for participating in Group B oversight:

- Create a local ordinance at least as stringent as the Board Rules.
- Implement the Board Rules through delegated authority from us.
- Provide technical assistance to Group B applicants and owners without any regulatory responsibility.

On January 1, 2014, a new Group B Rule went into effect. The new Board of Health rule adopts higher standards for new system approval, but eliminates almost all on-going regulation of Group B systems.

### 22 of 39 counties oversee Group B systems

Of Washington's Group B water systems, 9,700 (72 percent) are in counties where LHJs adopted a local ordinance or where LHJs have delegated authority from us for Group B oversight. These counties approve Group B systems and may issue waivers from regulation as long as the waivers do not reduce public health protections provided in our Group B rule.

### Washington's Local Health Jurisdictions



- ★ Adopted a local ordinance
- Entered a Joint Plan of Responsibility with us
- Have no involvement



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

## The Legislation that changed the Group B Program

In the tight fiscal climate of 2009, the Legislature ended all state funding to the Group B Program and revised the enabling legislation. It excluded a requirement for the Group B Rule to address ongoing requirements, such as water sampling. It also directed the Board to adopt the following

- The rule must address at least the initial design and construction of a Group B water system.
- LHJs can establish a local ordinance that's at least as stringent as the state rule.
- The state rule may eliminate some or all regulatory requirements for Group B systems that serve fewer than five connections.

We worked with the Board and stakeholders to develop a fee-supported rule that meets the Legislature's direction and protects public health. The Board unanimously approved the new rule in October 2012. Founded on three principles, the new rule went into effect January 1, 2014.

1. Strong design standards using low risk sources to ensure safe, long-lasting facilities.
2. Provide a local option for Group B public water system oversight.
3. Educate and empower owners, consumers and designers to follow best public health practices without force of rule.

## Group B Resources

We developed a several online tools to help Group B water systems. You can access them at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/WaterSystemAssistance/GroupB>

- **Emergency Response:** Resources to support Group B water systems during drinking water emergencies or when developing emergency response plans, including emergency contact numbers and actions recommended to protect water system customers.
- **Group B system design and planning:** Provides information on Group B system requirements, guidance to assist with system expansion, design guidelines, forms, templates, and other resources.
- **Group B system Operations and Maintenance:** Guidance to help owners and operators maintain and operate Group B water systems.
- **Information for consumers, operators and owners:** General information on Group B water systems and links to resources you can use to keep yourself and your household healthy.

## For more information:

Call our regional office.

**Eastern Region:** Spokane Valley (509) 329-2100

**Northwest Region:** Kent (253) 395-6750

**Southwest Region:** Tumwater (360) 236-3030

Our publications are online at <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/eh/dw/publications/publications.cfm>



For people with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).